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MORALE AND MORALS.

HENRY T. SECRIST.

THE commanding officer of one of the training camps during the war said to me that he was not concerned with the morals of his men but he would not stand having a man in the United States uniform drunk and he would use every means in his power to prevent it. The language of the statement was adorned with the customary army emphasis and has to be toned down to suit peace-time tastes. But the feeling of the officer was very strong. He was also an officer of the regular army. There was no intimation that he would want his position kept secret. Besides he acted on what he said. His own morals were good. He and those under him were noticeably concerned with keeping drunkenness out of the uniforms and with many other practices and habits which interfered with the discipline and efficiency and the appearance of the soldiers. Many of these things would generally be counted within the region of morals, but as morals they had no influence with the commandant. It was as matters of morale that he was interested in them and not as matters of morals.

There was, and doubtless is, this distinction between morale and morals. Morale won its place in the army and navy. It had a standing of its own. Officers who came to believe in the many influences within and without the camps which helped to create morale among the men would have resented the idea that they were deciding and enforcing ideas and rules of right and wrong. And there were features of morale which plainly did not touch morals. Confidence in the ability of their leaders, the sense of certain skill in tactics and in the handling of arms, had a place in creating the spirit which was commonly known as morale. The need of morale was so generally recognized that morale officers were appointed. And the word itself gained such an honorable distinction that a department has been created.

There should be no hesitation in accepting it as the same thing even though the department is called "The Recreational and Educational Department." The army need not be shy of the word morale, even if it does sound like morals, for morale had won its own standing, with its own separate authority. This recognition of the place of morale in the estimation of military leaders and the practical applications of it are features of the war which have as yet hardly received the attention they deserve. Morale, under whatever term one chooses to put it, had its place in keeping the service men "fit," and it too helped to "win the war."

There are, however, certain inevitable associations which link morals with morale, both in the army and out of it. Some confusion arose in the minds of people who had accepted rules and standards of morals which were not admitted by those who aim only to cultivate morale. Many good people were often shocked by what was allowed to pass and there is little wonder. They could not make the distinction and were surprised that no determined efforts were made to eliminate practices which to them had always been regarded as wrong. Their traditional morals received a terrible shock. Others yielded reluctantly on account of the war, which made an excuse for almost anything, and put it down to the credit of temporary necessity. It has done many persons good to have to re-examine these matters of right and wrong, of temporary necessity, of the connection of morale and morals. They have had a chance to grow. And this does not mean that morale has won out over morals and has established a law which is superior to the moral law. Indeed there is where there is a rub.

What is to be the effect after the war? What already? Things have not always come out as it was anticipated they might. It is certain that morals and morale in civil life must have close connections. It is of much importance that the men returning to civil life get back to the essential of the moral code even if some of the

traditional ideas must be modified. Morale may add a distinct element in national, community and domestic affairs but it must not set up an authority above the moral law. The highest test is still that of right and wrong. But we shall be missing a great force in all these ways if we do not carry over into them the compelling power of morale. The morale of the community as well as its morals may, with promise of gain in social efficiency, be considered and means adopted to foster it.

The surprise and confusion which came during the war to some orthodox believers or purists in morals were in a measure justified. The case of drink and drunkenness is directly to the point. To many this had been largely in the region of morals. In the army that phase of the question was not even considered. The officer did not want his men to get drunk because it unfitted them for doing what they were there to do. He wanted them to drill, to be relied on, to become exact and skilful, to occupy their places in the ranks; and drinking tended to hinder all this efficiency of the good soldier. So not only was the five mile zone ordered nationally but every effort was made to hinder the illegal and private means of getting liquor to soldiers. National war prohibition was justified from the standpoint of morale. The man under the influence of liquor could not do his duty in the service. The drunk soldier or sailor was absurd, intolerable, a pitiable spectacle in uniform. This feeling was very general during the training period, with the incentive of the French front in prospect. In certain camps it became an uncommon thing to see a staggering soldier and one such was quickly put to the sobering off process. The military officers often asked the civil authorities to turn any offenders over to them and they would be treated in the strict military way. If one prefers he can lift even this case up into the highest morals by saying that it was not right for a man to get drunk or to be allowed to have intoxicants when this interfered with his duty in preparing to defend righteousness, liberty and justice in the world. But practically the question of the

right or wrong of getting drunk or of having or handling liquor did not enter, and morals had nothing to do with it. Morale on its own initiative and authority decided against drink.

The case of venereal disease is hardly different. This had a very direct relation to the army as it was being trained and kept fit for effective action. There were doubtless some officers of rank who considered this one of the inevitable accompaniments of war and an army or navy. Such were far more numerous at the beginning of the American war period than later. It is possible that the coming into the army of so many civilians who brought a different standard had something to do with a change of idea and habit. Anyhow there were those who believed that the habits which produced venereal diseases were not necessary and, under the circumstances of the high idealism of the American war motive, were inexcusable. Where a strong fighting force was being built up, to allow an increase of these diseases was a military error. It was morale which insisted that not only should everything possible be done to do away with these diseases when they were brought in from civil life, as most of them were brought, but that vigorous means should be used to prevent the enticements about the camps which had been the usual accompaniments of army life. What was done in this direction is a story yet to be told. It is startling in its significance.

There were some medical officers who joined morals with morale in dealing with the men who had these diseases. A patient being treated in a hospital for a venereal disease told the doctor that he was in much pain. The Major Doctor's reply was that he ought to be in pain. As the patient was a big, strong man who should have been out in the ranks instead of in bed it is impossible to tell whether the "ought" of the doctor had relation to the military or the moral law. In that case the two were probably combined. The standard of the service demanded well men and the medical department of the army joined with many other forces outside the camps to maintain the bearing

and efficiency of the soldiers as well as to protect the community. At least so it was in some of the American training camps. Just where to place the willingness of some military officers to assist civil officers and citizens in detecting and punishing soldiers who offended against the community by betraying innocent girls is difficult to decide, but such cases, to the great credit of the army, have been known. The law of morale could not get wholly away from the moral law.

In language the soldier and sailor, the men and the officers, offended seriously in the ears of the traditional believer, who places swearing in the list of moral evils. For swear the army and navy certainly did. It seemed impossible to resist the oath. There have been some philosophical explanations published as to why soldiers and sailors swear, but they seem rather far fetched. The best explanation is that they simply do it and that they generally do not mean to be bad in doing it. It is contagious, and under the special circumstances of close association of men, it becomes accepted. It is possible that it may be thought to increase morale. But that good men take to the habit and find it hard to break would be admitted by many who have been in the service or close to it. However that may be, the severity of judgment against those who take sacred names in vain, as measured by the standards of ordinary intercourse, was somewhat lessened.

To many there came a conflict between morals and morale in associated war work where dancing was concerned. There were some who did not yield to the demand of the soldier and sailor for dancing and clung to their conviction that dancing is at all times and under all circumstances bad. There were at least a few such who would not have any part in providing dancing themselves who yet frankly admitted that dancing in the times when off duty was not only harmless but to be commended. There were others who never thought that dancing was in itself wrong. And there were some few converts who frankly admitted that it was a good thing to allow the men to

dance under wise regulations and careful control. These were not at all trivial matters for those involved. The necessities of the situation and the inherited feeling against all dancing brought a real conflict in some minds and there was many a twinge of conscience. Certain organizations saw plainly that the men would rather dance than do anything else. Nothing in the way of diversion, so necessary to morale, so pleased the large number of them. For these people provided places and girls for dances where the men from the camps and stations could meet decent girls and dance with them under proper chaperonage, without harm to either the men or the girls. The effort was made to offset the objectionable dances where harm would come through bad management, such dances as were bad from the standpoints of both morals and morale. A woman who was at the head of an organization which did not regularly believe in dancing openly confessed that she would face the facts of the situation and would help to provide dances that would help to please the men and would tend to save them from much worse things. And if morale was made up partly in keeping the men interested and contented and if wholesome associations were an antidote to vice, it is clear that dancing had a vindication in its connections with morals as well as with morale.

Just what can be said for gambling in the army and navy is not so certain. No one who knew about things near at hand could deny its prevalence. The rule against it was not enforced. It could hardly be said in defence of it that it built up morale. It may have occupied some idle hours. In the period when men in camps were under hard discipline and the eyes of the men were on the French front money was an insignificant matter and the gambling became merely a game or a pastime and the wrong of the money involved was not so conspicuous as it would be under normal conditions. But there were certain aspects of the matter where the moralist has the arguments in his favor and can make out a case against morale. And the many boys who learned to gamble in the camps

may not easily escape the dangerous clutches of the practice when back in civil life. Even those who were not sticklers for strictness in army customs and were willing to grant many concessions on account of the difficult circumstances, especially if the morale of the fighting force could be kept up, failed to see any gain from almost universal gambling and were ready to acknowledge that the wrong against morals was a serious one.

But it was only in certain restricted views as to moral practices that there was any conflict between morale and morals. Whether the officer felt any responsibility for the morals of his men or not, in building up their morale he was actually engaged in strengthening the characters of the men by encouraging moral actions. And in this he was aided by the tremendous power of the war motive as well as by the authority of his official position. Sound men generally and in the end made the best contributions to the fighting force. It must be acknowledged that many men who had not been counted moral rallied under the pervading impulse, assisted by the strict regulations, and became some of the most dependable of their companies. And in some cases it was first this response to the appeal of morale which saved them finally to a continued moral life. The two factors were mixed in a most wholesome way and aided each other.

A valuable comparison along this same line is to be found in the motives and methods of those organizations closely attached to the war service and commonly known as welfare organizations. In some of these the aim doubtless was to make or keep the men good in the moral sense. But in others and to some extent in most of them the purpose was to work in the direction of morale, to fit the men to fight in their cause, and to equip them as good soldiers. This was done by keeping them in normal relations with life and thus maintaining their ideals and their good spirits. Entertainments, hospitality, personal service and all such extraneous efforts of societies and citizens were in the main directed toward the morale of the men rather than toward

their moral welfare. It was the general conviction of such workers that good habits and high ideals not only did not hinder soldierly power and bearing but actually and considerably added to it. And not many will doubt that this was the peculiar American idea. That it proved to be so no one who knows will doubt.

In the period of demobilization the moral element may have become more pronounced. But even then to rally the spirit of the returning men was a supreme necessity; and to keep up the inevitable declining morale was the best means of getting them back safely into community life.

In this work there were two distinct aims and methods. One would let the soldier have anything he should want. What matter the character of the entertainment? Let the men have anything that will please and divert them. And some rather low types were allowed to pass under this superficial idea. Some of the shows furnished lacked even common decency. This was supposed to build up morale. But it did not do it. The other type of organization or worker knew that we must take the men where they were or we would not take them at all. They were not concerned with making the men directly either moral or religious. They furnished shows that were bright and attractive. They gave some of the best music, but the kind that had force and movement in it. And the effect was to leave the men with at least a wholesome taste. It kept the men near enough to the moral ideal and habit to have a wholesome mind. It was significant that soldiers preferred, as expressed by their own vote, the movies of the western life stories to the stories with lewd suggestions or with sickly sentimentality. What made at the same time for morale and morals was the picture of life that had strength and action in it.

Now in after-war conditions there is something to be gained from this tried out experience with the working of morale and morals. Army and navy morale has something to give to social relations. The civic morale must be kept up. The forces that create a strong and united spirit

must be found. The moral workers will do well to take account of the forces of morale. Certain practices that are innocent may be permitted and encouraged because they create interest, occupy well the dangerous idle hour and so make for the safety of a strong morale in the city or state. Some things that have been regarded wholly or mainly as moral and have as such been urged as a public obligation may be shifted to community or national morale. We may say of habits that while we are not to judge of them morally, they weaken the public service, keep men from useful employment and generally lower the morale of the people. So they must be forbidden. And as there must be alert interest for the safety of the state we shall contrive means toward this end. That requires attention to both the great convictions of purpose and order and also careful regard for the small, pleasing things that amount to so much in making morale, simply because all men and women are human.

Those, indeed, whose business it is to deal directly with the bases of morals will in their various ways see to it that the foundations are made secure. They will insist on obedience to the moral law as such. They will cultivate respect for it and let it be known that nothing can supplant duty. The churches and societies have a big job on their hands. And because it is so big they may welcome the re-enforcements that come from morale. And when all join in the national and community life, where there are inevitable differences as to right and wrong, we may well lay hold of morale to aid in winning out for safety and progress. And in such morale, as also in morals, it is clear that mere private whims have no place and must be surrendered. What we are trying to build up is the morale of the American civil forces. If we can have these strengthened by connection with the moral motives and obligations we can go unwearied to the world's civil forces and so add to them as to insure victory for the ideal which is at the heart of both morals and morale.

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